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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT TALKS, TAIWAN-JAPAN DISPUTE,
U.S. GLOBAL INFLUENCE

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to give extensive coverage on June 17 to the dispute between Taiwan and Japan over the Diaoyutai (generally anglicized in Taiwan as "Tiaoyutai") Islands and to the resignation of Taiwan's representative to Japan. Local newspapers devoted considerable coverage to a Taiwan "protest" ship's voyage to the disputed waters and the confrontation between a Taiwan Coast Guard vessel and a Japanese patrol boat Monday. The pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged a banner headline reading "For the First Time, [Taiwan's] Coast Guard Has Pushed Forward to within 0.4 Nautical Miles of the Tiaoyutai Islands."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" continued its criticism against President Ma Ying-jeou's cross-strait policy, saying it has compromised Taiwan's sovereignty. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also condemned Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) for lacking a coherent strategy and thus damaging Taiwan's national security and sovereignty in the course of negotiating with China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS). A separate "Liberty Times" column discussed the recent dispute between Taiwan and Japan over the Tiaoyutai Islands and urged the Ma administration to seek to form an equilateral triangular relationship with the United States, Japan and China, so that no side will feel threatened or will overpower the other. Meanwhile, a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" expressed worries - based on both the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates' campaign platforms - that the next U.S. government will lead the United States back to isolationism. End summary.

¶3. Cross-Strait Talks

A) "Can the [Taiwan] People Keep Silent About Ma Ying-jeou Doing Away With [Taiwan's] Sovereignty?"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (6/17):

"... At the moment, President Ma [Ying-jeou] has put cross-strait relations ahead of foreign policy. In order to beg mercy from China for launching the direct charter flights and opening Taiwan to mainland tourists, [Ma] has blatantly accepted the consensus on one China without retaining [Taiwan's] dignity, autonomy and security at all. Ma once said 'we have the determination to defend Taiwan's security.' However, a recent report in the 'Washington Post' said 'Taiwan's government privately had requested that the U.S. administration not send the notifications in the next few weeks to the U.S. Congress as China and Taiwan complete negotiations on launching charter flights and expanding tourism between the two countries.' In addition, opening up eight domestic airports for direct flights will jeopardize [Taiwan's] national security, and [it showed that] President Ma has no awareness and determination to protect [Taiwan's] sovereignty at all.

"Since a nation's sovereignty belongs to all of its nationals, each one of us has the responsibility to oppose and prevent President Ma from taking advantage of the civil organization [i.e., the Straits Exchange Foundation] as a cover up for gradually integrating Taiwan's sovereignty into [the principle of] 'one China'. This will be like slowly boiling a frog in water that starts out cold. [Ed.: an old Chinese saying about damaging incremental changes, only noticed when it's too late.] Before too long, Taiwan will thoroughly 'forfeit its sovereignty and be conquered' by China easily. We believe that in order to assure 'the principle that sovereignty lies in the hands of its people' and to exercise 'direct democracy,' the best strategy for President Ma for now is to put any moves that may alter Taiwan's sovereignty to a popular vote. President Ma should not have forgotten his vow that 'nothing will count unless it has been approved by the Taiwan people!'"

B) "PRC Uses Pacts to Tame Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (6/17):

"... While Beijing front-line squad was composed of seasoned veterans of the SEF-ARATS talks during the 1990s, the Taiwan delegation was headed by an elderly former technocrat with scant diplomatic experience and included no one with front line experience of SEF-ARATS negotiations. In addition, the KMT side was afflicted by the absence of a coherent strategy, infighting over the right to dominate the negotiating process and by blatant attempts by delegates, some of whom had or have PRC business links, to turn the negotiations into media talk shows. ...

"Moreover, the decision to open all eight airports to Chinese tourists clearly did not consider the potential impact on Taiwan's U.S. GLOBAL INFLUENCE

national security or the capacity of immigration control to manage the inflow. Lastly, [SEF Chairman] Chiang [Pin-kun]'s meeting with [Chinese President] Hu [Jintao] in the latter's status as CCP General Secretary only confirmed the hegemony of the CCP-KMT 'party to party platform' over Taiwan's democratically elected government as Hu indicated that the SEF chairman's plea for Taiwan's international space would be handled under the 'five point' accord between Hu and then KMT chairman Lien Chan in April 2005.

"President Ma [Ying-jeou] may be correct when he gleefully lauded Chiang's 'achievement' as a 'great step forward in cross-strait relations,' but the path Ma has put Taiwan on leads only into transformation of the 'Taiwan question' into 'a domestic affair' of the PRC authoritarian state and the neo-authoritarian KMT and not to better well-being, greater autonomy or even security for our 23 million people."

14. Taiwan-Japan Dispute

"The Strategic Golden Triangle"

Columnist Lin Wen-cheng noted in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (6/17):

"The collision between the Taiwan fishing boat 'Lien Ho' [and a Japanese frigate last week] has triggered tension between Taiwan and Japan and has forced the Ma administration to lay its national security strategy out on the table earlier than planned. It has become an internal and external item of attention as to whether Taiwan will alter the policy direction of 'joining hands with the United States and Japan to confront China' adopted by the [former] Chen Shui-bian administration and change it into a strategic plan of 'joining hands with China and keeping a distance from the United States and Japan.' ...

"Since President Ma took office, his top priority has been to improve [Taiwan's] relations with China. The resumption of talks between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait was seen as a move of positive interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and is widely welcomed by the international community. But the KMT's long-term practice of procrastinating on the arms procurement

package and Ma's potential obsession in resisting Japan have cast shadows over both the United States and Japan. If both sides of the Strait quickly get intimate with each other, Washington and Tokyo will be concerned about whether Taiwan will be tilting toward China and as a result, creating a breach in the first island chain of the [U.S.-Japan] alliance. Should this happen, it will generate enormous impact on the United States' strategic planning in the Pacific and on Japan's national security and maritime transportation. ...

"It is not in Taiwan's best interests either to join hands with China to restrain the United States and Japan, or to [adopt] the extremism of joining hands with Washington and Tokyo to restrain Beijing. For Taiwan, which is strong in neither territory nor military strength, it will not be able to enjoy its strategic freedom and grasp the greatest possible power and benefits unless it [seeks to] form an equilateral triangular relationship with the United States, Japan and China, allowing no side feel threatened nor allowing any one side to overpower another. ..."

15. The U.S. Global Influence

"Will the Next U.S. Government Return to Isolationism?"

Deputy Editor-in-Chief Kuo Chen-lung wrote in the "International Column" in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (6/17):

"... The imperial power of the United States has become overstretched, which is worrisome.

"... In the wake of the Cold War, the United States became the only superpower in the world. America's economic and military strength made it a successor of the various empires in history. Although every country has to subject itself to the empire, the empire, in return, will provide order, communication and systems to each country. Once the empire loses such ability, every country will then proclaim itself as king and set up boundaries, and chaos will prevail.

"Now, in terms of currency, the competition for resources, or even overseas military presence, the United States is facing more and more competitors. Given that Washington is already overstretched, the decline of the [U.S.] empire has become inevitable. The United States has become less and less significant on the globe.

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"The study of empires has become a famous doctrine now.... Given the consequences of declining U.S. national power, even a [U.S.] president who has the greatest talent and a grand vision will have to accept the reality that the influence [of the United States] is waning."

YOUNG